

# ***Parks and Recreation Section***

**J. R. Pope, Chief**

## **Introduction**

This report provides a review of the major programs, policy actions, and challenges being addressed within the West Virginia State Parks and Recreation system as of June 30, 2003.

## **Overview**

The West Virginia State Parks System promotes conservation and public recreation by preserving and protecting natural areas of unique or exceptional scenic, scientific, cultural, archaeological or historic significance, and provides outdoor recreational opportunities while maintaining the state parks in a natural condition. Additionally, the system enhances West Virginia's tourism industry. System managers also strive to operate revenue-producing facilities efficiently by maximizing revenue and minimizing expenditures. As with any organization, there are particular areas of management focus that evolve and change in response to its current environment. These are outlined in the Goals, Objectives, and Challenges Section following this overview.

Parks manages 34 state parks, recreational facilities on nine state forests and four wildlife management areas, the Greenbrier River Trail, and the North Bend Rail Trail. From rustic Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) era areas with little development to massive modern resorts, from restored logging railroads and company towns to Civil War battlefields, from natural areas with national significance to areas that are primarily day-use local recreational facilities, West Virginia state parks, forests, and wildlife management areas offer tremendous variety and fill a number of roles. To the local citizen, they are sources of employment and public recreation that may not otherwise be available; to the state citizen at large, they are a valuable regional source of good quality, reasonably-priced vacation and outdoor recreational experiences; and to the out-of-state tourist, they are among the nation's finest state park vacation destinations. They serve a valuable role, along with skiing and whitewater rafting, as a cornerstone of tourism in West Virginia. In fact, Division of Tourism surveys of out-of-state tourists consistently reveal state and national parks as the single biggest attraction that brought these individuals to the state.

To support these 49 units are some 450 classified service employees, 1,000 hourly and seasonal employees at the peak of seasonal employment, several major park concessionaires, and construction and repair projects usually amounting to millions of dollars annually. To meet the administrative demands imposed by these resources, Parks uses six statewide general administrative personnel. These are a chief, a deputy chief who is also in charge of Operations, a business manager and three district administrators. In addition, there are two technical program administrators in the form of an assistant chief in charge of Planning, Engineering and Maintenance (PEM) and a coordinator in charge of Programming, interpretive services, special events, gift certificate sales, youth programs and various other special functions. A group sales representative based in Charleston works to promote room sales at the lodge and resort parks. This individual, along with a Pipestem Resort State Park sales person, is provided a base salary as well as incentives for increases in lodge occupancy.

Parks is fortunate to be staffed with an excellent corps of park superintendents and assistants with a high average level of appropriate education, experience, and training. These individuals are particularly important since they play a variety of roles that are vital to the success of the park operation. As general managers, they must direct natural resource, business, personnel, public relations, law enforcement, maintenance, guest and employee safety and all other programs essential to their areas of assignment. These individuals are a key factor in assuring a continued high level of customer satisfaction as evidenced by overwhelmingly positive guest comment cards. West Virginia State Parks feature a nationally unique program in which park managers are made eligible for annual salary differential payments based upon improvement in key financial indicators at their area of assignment.

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### **System-wide Goals, Objectives, and Challenges**

#### **Self-sufficiency**

It is obvious that state parks should endeavor to be as self-sufficient as possible while at the same time protecting the overall mission and resources associated with the system. Despite the remote location of some areas; inherent design inefficiencies dating back to periods when maximizing local employment was a paramount goal; the very low revenue production of some day-use, historical, wildlife, and forest areas; public resistance to rate increases and entrance fees; and addition to the system over the years of several "loss leader" local recreation areas, the West Virginia State Park system has traditionally been and continues to be one of the most operationally self-sufficient in the nation.

The Fiscal Year 2003 operational self-sufficiency figure of 61 percent came in the face of increased operating expenses caused by unfunded across-the-board raises within certain accounts as well as cost shifting throughout state government which placed a financial burden on all agencies. The latter has become a trend and will pose new operational challenges for the next few years to come. In addition, the last half of Fiscal Year 03 saw decreased revenues due to extremely poor weather.

Of course, direct revenues do not measure the full economic benefit of the park system. An economic impact study conducted several years ago by the Marshall University Center for Business and Economic Research very conservatively concluded that state park visitor spending had a total direct and indirect impact of \$105 million on the economy of West Virginia.

#### **Lodge Sales**

An ongoing effort to maximize occupancy in all state park lodges, especially in the off season, is the task of the two group sales staffers (one in Charleston, one at Pipestem Resort State Park) who market lodges and resort parks to various organizations throughout the state and country. The sales staffers are paid a base salary plus incentives for increases in lodge occupancy. Efforts include sales and telemarketing calls to corporations, state and federal gov-

ernment agencies, travel agencies, tour groups and the like. Direct mailings and travel shows are also used frequently. These employees work particularly hard to attract off-season, mid-week business which is the most difficult lodging sales challenge facing the park system.

#### **Infrastructure Improvements**

Major projects completed this fiscal year included repairs to the dam-monitoring well at Babcock, improvements to the Lindy Point Overlook at Blackwater Falls, completion of a Vo-Tech constructed modular cabin at Cabwalingo, drilling of a fourth water well at Cacapon, repairs to the Canaan Valley lodge units, paving along the Greenbrier River Trail, completion of the Hawks Nest golf course irrigation system and limited cart paths as well as replacement of the Pipestem tram wire rope.

The Stonewall Jackson Lake Resort development was completed except for five remaining cabins and additional campsites, and all areas have opened for business. Major projects still underway at year's end included the Spring House renovation at Berkeley Springs, water line replacement at Cacapon, water well and fire alarm work at Canaan, Vo-Tech residence construction at Kanawha, Moncove Lake and North Bend and continuing flood repairs at Panther.

#### **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Compliance**

Most of the items identified in the system-wide assessment of several years ago are complete while smaller additional and ever evolving needs remain. Over the past 12 months lodge lobby restroom accessibility at Pipestem's McKeever Lodge was improved and now exceeds standards.

#### **Automation**

At the time of this report, Parks was installing a hotel/motel Internet compatible reservation and property management system featuring field based processors with a central backup in Charleston as well as high speed T-1 communication links. This is to go in at all seven state operated lodge/resort parks by 2004 and in later phases will encompass all major vacation parks. This project was funded in 96/97 and ready for procurement and implementation in 1999 but was delayed due to an alternative, failed approach

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advocated by a separate segment of state government with responsibility for coordinating automation efforts. Parks was allowed to proceed with its approach in mid-2002 and it is proving very successful.

### **Minority Recruitment**

Parks continues to attempt to increase the representation of minority groups in the work force. There is a commitment to add employment minorities within the Division of Personnel framework that governs the selections for the classified service.

### **Hazardous Dams**

The Dam Control Office of the Division of Environmental Protection had declared dams on several areas, including Blackwater Falls, Cacapon Resort and Tomlinson Run state parks, as being hazardous structures. Funding is being sought to remedy these. Moncove Lake is already funded and A/E work is in progress. As a state statutory requirement, a monitoring and evacuation plan is kept current for each major dam.

### **Asbestos Removal**

Efforts continued to remove asbestos roofing shingles, pipe lagging, floor tiles and general building insulation as necessary. Particularly significant progress has been made in roof replacements, but many small projects to abate pipe lagging and other forms of insulation remain to be completed, particularly in lodges. Public and employee safety hazards will continue to receive the highest priority.

### **Flood Repairs**

A particularly destructive flood hit Panther State Forest in McDowell County in the spring of 2002, which closed the area for the remainder of the year. The area was hit again in February 2003 with flooding that complicated clean-up efforts but the forest reopened in spring of 2003. Beech Fork State Park suffered high water in February 2003, with several buildings receiving moderate damage, and the camping and recreation areas were closed for a short time for clean-up. Several other areas, including Bluestone State Park, Bluestone Wildlife Management Area and Cathedral State Park suffered from high water in the late spring of 2003.

### **Individual Area and Section Activity Reports**

West Virginia parks, forests, and wildlife management areas differ from those in most other states because of their added role in filling a local recreational niche occupied elsewhere by local government. Local communities in West Virginia often cannot afford to provide the recreational opportunities such as tennis courts, swimming pools, picnic areas and similar items that are a primary responsibility of city and county government in other states, so over the years this function has come to be expected from state government.

Because of this and other factors, requirements for maintaining the individual parks, forests, and wildlife management areas are quite varied. Facilities range from the modern development at parks like Canaan, Pipestem and Stonewall Jackson to historical structures dating from the CCC days. Replacement and upkeep of aging infrastructure at various areas is a constant challenge. This section of the annual report will focus mainly on repair issues since the common themes of self-sufficiency, compliance programs, and similar management challenges are described elsewhere.

#### **Audra State Park**

Work continued on upgrading the shower houses to include installation of tile in the shower stalls and new fixtures throughout. The main water line from the PSD service to the large bathhouse was replaced. Roofs were replaced in the picnic area and riverside restrooms. Skylights were replaced in both buildings. Trail repairs throughout the park included replacing footbridges and culverts.

#### **Babcock State Park**

The cabin interior redecoration project included new bedding (pillows, blankets, bedspreads), draperies, appliances, hot water tanks, chest of drawers, tables and chairs. Another project involved rebuilding the cabin steps on the canyon cabins (1 - 13) and building steps to cabin 18 in the Manns Creek area. Maintenance staff also built steps to the restrooms at Boley Lake. The parking area was extended at Manns Creek picnic area. The electrical service at the campground was upgraded from 400 amp to 600 amp. The old fuel tanks at the side of the administration building were removed and transferred to Bluestone WMA.

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### **Beartown State Park**

Paving the entrance road and parking area was the major improvement for this past fiscal year. Maintenance and repair work included clearing fallen debris after an ice storm, replacing broken or missing lumber and signs along the boardwalk, litter removal and mowing. Numerous family and school groups were guided through the rock formations. The damage done by the hemlock wooly adelgid is worsening despite control efforts including release of predatory beetles.

### **Beech Fork State Park**

The major project this past year was the paving of 138 campsites and graveling another 50 for future paving. An engineering firm was selected for the design of a new wastewater treatment plant to replace the existing 25 year old plant. Construction began on a new restroom facility to replace one destroyed by fire two years ago. A new trash removal system was implemented in the campground with guests asked to remove their own trash to conveniently located dumpsters. The park suffered one major flood event in February when there was a melt-off of accumulated ice and snow from a major storm. Damage was done to six bathhouse or restroom buildings and three campgrounds. The recreation area was closed for several weeks for clean up. Additional high water in May caused campground closure but no damage. The WV DOH repaired large slips along the cabin hill roadway. A new, larger boat dock was constructed for the park rental boats and cabin guests.

### **Berkeley Springs State Park**

At the main bathhouse, interior emergency lighting was installed at each exit and the roof, exterior boxing and trim were repaired and repainted. The Old Roman Bathhouse lobby and hallway were painted, all wooden screen doors from the bathhouses and headquarters building were reconditioned and stained. A new electric vacuum system was designed and installed at the swimming pool, the pool entrance and dressing rooms were painted, the pool gutter was patched and painted and the area around the pool was landscaped with dozens of dwarf rhododendron. A new steel post/chain fence was constructed around the pool planter beds.

### **Berwind Lake Wildlife Management Area**

A new picnic area was constructed with a 75-foot wall built to hold the fill used to widen the area. In addition, part of the hillside was removed for parking, culverts were installed and ditch work done, a 20' x 12' concrete slab was poured and picnic tables, grills and trashcans placed. The old pump house was torn down, a new one built and water lines were run to four campsites and the office. The office bathroom was renovated. The swimming pool was closed for renovations due to severe water loss through leaks and broken lines. A new driveway was constructed at the residence. Most area buildings were painted, new storage areas were built in the maintenance shop, park signs were replaced, the brush was trimmed around the lake and an information shelter was built. The area participated in the Make It Shine clean up day and hosted the fourth annual Kids Fishing Day, which drew over 200 children.

### **Blackwater Falls State Park**

The cabin roofing project was completed with the last six cabins re-roofed. One cabin received extensive wall and flooring repairs and another was refurbished with new counter tops, refinished floors and painting. Draperies and bedspreads were purchased for the cabins along with chair cushions. Some furniture was reupholstered. New furnaces were installed in four cabins. A program to replace grills in the picnic area and fire rings in the campground began. Fiberglass panels were installed in the campground showers. The lodge boilers were relined. The observation deck at Lindy Run was completed and a bridge over Dinky Run was built with assistance from the Tucker County Trails Organization. Replacement of the observation deck on the Gentle Trail was begun.

### **Blennerhassett Island Historical State Park**

The island again escaped major flooding for the fourth season in a row, though the island was closed briefly by high water in May 2003. The second annual island deer hunt was held, which succeeded in reducing the island deer population to a manageable level. Two air conditioner compressors were replaced in the mansion and one in the museum. The steps to the elevator control building on the roof of the museum were replaced. Dry wall repairs and painting were



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done in the museum and two ceiling fans were installed. Motion Masters Company upgraded the informational video shown at the museum and a new video projector was installed. All island buildings were treated for termites. The transformer tower on the island was replaced. Estimated volunteer service to the park totaled in excess of 18,200 hours.

### **Bluestone State Park**

The park procured two new GMC Sierra 4 x 4 pickup trucks, and a new John Deere Zero turning radius 54-inch deck mower. Construction included an additional 14' x 30' room at the Assistant Superintendent's residence. The kitchen in the superintendent's residence was completely renovated, replacing the original kitchen that was constructed in the early 1950's. On February 3 - 4, 2003, Terraden Corporation completed core drilling at the proposed construction site of the new swimming pool. New queen-size mattresses and box springs were placed in all 26 cabins. The bathrooms in two six-person cabins were completely renovated. Automatic shutoff coffee makers were placed in all 26 cabins. Upholstery was replaced on couches and chairs in 25 cabins. The walls in the bathrooms were repaired and painted in 7 cabins. Shingles were replaced on 5 cabins. Water heaters were replaced in 2 cabins. A new electric range was installed in Cabin #23. Bluestone endured four floods this year, ranging from 10 feet to 63 feet above summer pool. This required a good deal of flood debris cleanup.

### **Bluestone Wildlife Management Area**

Park maintenance and fee collection dominated the early part of the year. In March of 2003 the area suffered from significant flooding and the campgrounds were closed for several weeks for repairs. Mud was eight inches deep in some places. Once all areas were cleaned they were re-opened in late June.

### **Cabwaylingo State Forest**

The office and maintenance buildings were repainted, the new ADA accessible cabin was put into operation after final touches were done and furniture was installed and it has been well received by guests. Three footbridges were rebuilt on trails, the ADA improvements to the pool were

completed with the installation of tankless water heaters. Several poplar trees were cut on the area to be seasoned and used in the future for repairs to the CCC cabins. In addition, all CCC cabins are to receive new furniture and be repainted and rechinked. The forest again hosted the annual Stream Clean with volunteers assisting park staff. Unlike last year's busy forest fire season, there were no fires within the forest boundaries this year.

### **Cacapon Resort State Park**

A new deck was constructed around the Golf Pro Shop. New heat/air conditioning systems were installed in two cabins. Water distribution lines were replaced throughout much of the park, including lower cabin area, picnic area, beach, sewage treatment plant and maintenance areas. Four original CCC water fountains were restored back to original condition and operation. Portable outdoor gas grill was purchased for food and beverage department. Carpet was replace on lodge sun decks. A new emergency generator was purchased and installed at the lodge.

### **Camp Creek State Park**

A new laundry facility was constructed and the bathhouse was repainted at the Mash Fork camping area. The park office electrical system was upgraded and rewired and a new alarm system installed. The Farley Branch shelter wiring was upgraded and the water system was improved with a new pump control unit added. A new trail map was made with all hiking, biking and equestrian trails included and the trails themselves were marked with colors and symbols coded to correspond with the map. The residence furnace, porch roof and bathroom floor were replaced. New road gates were installed at the park/forest boundary and construction began on a new equestrian camping area with six campsites, restroom, horse stalls and roadway complete at year's end.

### **Canaan Valley Resort State Park**

The park received record snowfall for the 2002/2003 skiing season. The staff went above and beyond the call of duty to ensure the roadways were clear and safe for visitors. The roof of the platform building collapsed due to the weight of one snowfall. Improvements this fiscal year included an

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additional water well to augment the water supply, a new roof on the golf maintenance building, new fire alarm panels in lodging units, construction of two new snow making ponds for use next ski season and campground bathhouse renovations. A portion of the six-inch sewer line at the lodge was replaced, the lodge exterior was renovated and painted. Numerous meetings were held between Guest Services and state officials regarding projects in lieu of the nine-hole addition to the golf course that the concessionaire is contractually obligated to provide.

### **Carnifex Ferry Battlefield State Park**

During the year, approximately 25 percent of the main picnic area was renovated with landscaping, seeding and construction of four large, level picnic sites. The Patterson House was restained and work on the Sign Shop expansion began. The picnic area parking lot was sealed and striped, including three handicap spaces.

### **Cass Scenic Railroad State Park**

The park underwent an organizational change with the addition of a second assistant superintendent position and the overall responsibility for the park placed under the Seneca State Forest superintendent. The Masonic Lodge building was raised and stabilized with a new concrete foundation. Progress was made on other areas of the building, including reinstallation of siding, rebuilding of parapet walls, installing first and second story floors in the addition and painting and reinstalling dozens of windows. The depot interior was painted, major renovations were made to the mill superintendent's residence, which is now a residence for one of the assistant superintendents. The house was rewired, plumbing was upgraded, four bedrooms were redone and the kitchen was completely remodeled. The Cass Showcase was renovated, the diorama and model trains were overhauled, new audio/visual equipment was installed and the building was renovated with new interpretive displays and wiring and safety upgrades. A program of crosstie replacement continued along the rail lines with more than 200 new ties installed this year.

### **Cathedral State Park**

The park suffered from the severe winter as snowfall

was very significant and removal taxed the equipment. One heavy snow caused a small picnic shelter to collapse. A representative of the National Natural Landmarks section of the Department of the Interior toured the park this year. Final materials for the completion of the new water system were ordered. In June of 2003, heavy rains caused flooding that destroyed two footbridges and damaged two others. Volunteers from Alldridge Academy assisted in repairs to trails and bridges as well as debris cleanup.

### **Cedar Creek State Park**

Planning for the new 16-site campground expansion was completed and all necessary permits issued. Improvements to the existing campground included concrete pads and water service added to seven sites. Two ADA water fountains were installed in the camping area. The WV Department of Highways built a 20-foot bridge and installed a large box culvert on the campground road that should alleviate the past flooding problems during heavy rains. The DOH also paved six campsites and one fourth mile of roadway. A second entrance was constructed at the park General Store along with a new walkway. A new lighted park entrance sign was installed, as were security lights along the entrance road. The entrance, store, conference center, pools and office are now lighted. The park hosted the annual Gilmer County Little League Baseball opening ceremonies in April.

### **Chief Logan State Park**

Park staff built a new picnic shelter near the pool and installed new playground equipment and a grill at the shelter. The major maintenance project for the year was extension of electric and water service to campsites 15 through 25. New fire rings were installed at campsites that needed them as well. A new museum was opened in the former restaurant building and includes West Virginia artifacts, pictures, a model railroad exhibit and an educational film viewing room. A new water heater was installed at the campground and washer/dryer hookups and a new shower were installed at the conference center. Renovations to the lounge at the conference center began.

### **Coopers Rock State Forest**

Due to the large amount of snowfall during the winter

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of 2002-2003, a great deal of effort was required to remove damaged trees throughout the picnic areas. Several culverts were replaced in the main picnic area as well and ten new grills were installed. One large shelter was re-roofed by volunteers from the Morgantown Track Club. Bids were received for a new septic tank and drain field for one shelter restroom and work was begun.

### **Droop Mountain Battlefield State Park**

Grounds maintenance was the major activity through the entire fiscal year due to heavy ice storm damage and rain. Removing uprooted or hazardous trees and fallen branches, raking leaves and trimming roadsides were frequent tasks. Several culverts were replaced and the entrance road through the park was repaved. Parking areas for the battle reenactors were improved and brush on the hillside below the lookout tower was cleared. Building maintenance projects included a new cedar shingle roof on the museum and renovations to the park residence included floor refinishing and kitchen improvements and electrical work. The battle reenactment in October 2002, was well attended and school and other tour groups were frequent. Many of the park hemlock trees have been weakened and nearly defoliated by the wooly adelgid despite control efforts, including release of predatory beetles.

### **Greenbrier River Trail**

An additional two miles of trail were paved near Marlinton. Map boxes and benches were installed along the trail. One hundred informational signs were replaced.

### **Greenbrier State Forest**

The original casement windows were replaced in three cabins and four windows were replaced in the superintendent's residence. Extensive fire damage at the Kate's Mountain Picnic Shelter was repaired. Attic vents were installed in two maintenance buildings. Several stone fireplaces in the campground were rebuilt and one picnic shelter was restrained. The cabin remodeling project began with the replacement of bathroom medicine cabinets and kitchen stoves in 10 cabins. The forest hosted the annual wildflower and National Trails Day hikes, Boy Scout and Girl Scout camps and the reenactment of the Battle of White Sulphur Springs.

### **Hawks Nest State Park**

Much of the park maintenance tasks centered on the golf course. The irrigation and greens restoration projects included installing a new 7,000-foot pressurized irrigation system, a new 66,000 gallon reservoir, construction of 2,500 feet of concrete cart paths, two new bridges, restoring the sod nursery and reconstruction of all sand bunkers. The old Elkem electric service was replaced with a new three-phase line and the maintenance and clubhouse buildings were rewired. The first phase of the restoration of the CCC-era Hawks Nest overlook log hand railings and stone work was completed. At the lodge, the tramway electrical and cable system were repaired, 14 new sliding glass doors were installed in lodge rooms, the gift shop was renovated and new energy-efficient storm windows were installed on the west side and the tramway/nature center building at the river was hooked up to the potable water supply. The nature center restrooms were upgraded to ADA standards. The National Park Service announced the expansion of the New River Gorge National River boundaries, which now encompass the viewshed from Hawks Nest overlooks.

### **Holly River State Park**

Major improvements were made to the cabins as a result of the cabin redecoration project that included replacing commercial floor tile in the kitchen and bathrooms, replacing hot water heaters and installing electric baseboard heat. The cast-iron wood stoves were removed and all fireplaces were reworked with firebrick and mortar to return to the open fireplace style. New fireplace screens and tools were purchased. Electric refrigerators, ranges, microwaves and new dining room and bedroom furniture were purchased and installed in the cabins. The floor tile was replaced in the restaurant kitchen and storage room. The kitchen food preparation surfaces were covered with new Formica and a new exhaust fan was installed in the ceiling. The siding was replaced on the linen building, handrails were constructed at the entrance to the Old Pavilion and restroom entrances. The maintenance shop was renovated with the mechanics bay walled off and upgraded with water and heat. A small office was constructed for the water and sewage plant operator. The park foundation purchased a washer and dryer for the linen building for housekeeping personnel. The foundation also constructed two covered swings on the area.